

# GEER II Gap Expansion

Update: 7/1/21-12/31/21



COMMUNITY COLLEGES &  
WORKFORCE PREPARATION

The GEER II Gap Tuition Assistance Program expansion funding is part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, which was authorized under the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA). A total of \$2.9 million is earmarked for community colleges to expand access to short-term training programs aligned to in-demand careers such as advanced manufacturing, commercial truck driving, information technology, health care and welding. This allows more lowans whose jobs were impacted by the pandemic to enroll in short-term training and credential programs, secure valuable skills, and transition back into the workforce.



The GEER funds allowed for a pilot expansion of the existing program to serve students who would not otherwise have access, which includes addressing excess demand for existing Gap-eligible programs. Importantly, the expansion funds may be used on short-term credit programs, addressing a funding void that exists between non-credit programs and for-credit technical programs eligible for the federal Pell grant and/or the Future Ready Iowa Last Dollar Scholarship program. The expansion further aligned the Gap program with the Last Dollar Scholarship program by removing income eligibility requirements.



## High Demand Occupations/Training

All Iowa community colleges are currently providing expanded Gap programs to students, with many planning to add more options for students in both noncredit and short-term credit programs during the grant period ending in 2023. Below is a sample of the training programs offered currently for high demand occupations in Iowa through GEER II Gap Expansion.

### 16 Short-term credit programs, including:

- Nursing Assistant
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Welding
- Wastewater Treatment Basic
- Phlebotomy
- Sterile Processing Technician
- Account Specialist

### 82 Noncredit programs, including:

- Commercial Drivers License (Class A & B)
- Early Childhood Education
- Welding
- Certified Nurse Assistant
- Medication Aide
- Industrial Maintenance/Electrical
- Computer Numerical Machine Operator
- Pharmacy Technician
- Paramedic
- HVAC

## Current Status

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At 22.2 percent (six months) into the 27-month grant cycle, \$676,171 of the \$2,891,570 allocated to Gap II GEER Expansion has been used (target spend after six months: \$642,571), with most colleges having spent 23.4 percent of their funds. Three colleges have spent more than 40.0 percent of their funds to date.

*Note: First quarter spending was slightly delayed due the time to implement the program; the second quarter provides more clarity on spending.*

## Success Stories

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Though the expansion of Gap is in its early stages, success stories have already emerged from community colleges across the state.

“We are currently working with a student registered for our credit short-term Welding Certificate program that is not eligible for Pell or other financial aid, that would have not been able to afford or even consider advanced training without Gap GEER II.”

“We were able to enroll a student into our Weekend CDL program that had applied for GAP funding a year ago but was over income at that time. He hasn't been able to save up the \$3500 needed over the past year that was needed. When this fall's weekend program became available, he was very excited to find out that he would be able to qualify for GEER II GAP. The weekend option will allow him to continue supporting his family with a weekday job that barely pays his bills. The CDL program will give him a skill that he can take directly into another job that will pay a higher wage and provide the opportunity for extra endorsements and growth. This program won't finish until November, but I'm confident that he'll find a much better job to support his growing family.”

“A student who is a school associate at a local school district has been trying to achieve her paraeducator license for over three years but could never afford the course or the school district said they would cover it, but then dropped the tuition reimbursement. She lives alone and made just over the GAP income. Due to rent increasing the past seven years in Des Moines County, there was barely any extra money in the household. With GEER II that income was removed and we were able to support her through the paraeducator license courses. Her school district has put in writing that once completed, she will receive a \$4 increase in her wage with a guarantee job as a paraeducator with the district.”

“Michelle has wanted to be a nurse for a long time. She has a caregiver's heart, full of compassion and drive to help others. As a single parent of two young children, she needed to balance school, work and family. She started taking credit classes part-time while she worked to support her family. Academically, she is doing well and was recently recognized on the Dean's List. Financially, it has been a struggle. Michelle left her part-time position to focus on school and was seeking creative ways to help support her education goal. Nurse Aide is a pre-requisite for the nursing program and is not covered by federal financial aid. Michelle heard about the Gap2 program and applied for assistance. Gap2 was able to help Michelle with tuition for her nurse aide class, as well as paid for her book, scrubs and state testing fees. Michelle and her worker have also discussed other community resources to help support her during her educational journey. Michelle will complete her nurse aide class in September and plans to find part-time work as a nurse aide while she finishes her nursing classes.”

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